

IMPLEMENTING VISUAL CULTURE CURRICULUM FOR
UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS IN AN AFTERSCHOOL
CERAMICS PROGRAM

By

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ABSTRACT

VISUAL CULTURE CURRICULUM FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS IN AN AFTERSCHOOL CERAMICS PROGRAM

Economically disadvantaged students face an array of adversities during their childhood. With the media having an outstanding influence on the self-esteem of children, it is important that they have the tools necessary to question images they encounter. A Visual Culture curriculum in combination with a ceramics course can provide students with the methods to critique social norms and self-acceptance. With stories of contemporary ceramic artists and social activists like Roberto Lugo, it is possible that students can improve their self-esteem in a ceramics art program based on Olivia Gude's Visual Culture theories. The absence of art programs in low income public school districts may be detrimental to a student's self-esteem. After school and community art programs can foster the emotional growth in students by providing a safe environment to discuss and confront issues constructed by society.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background to the problem

In the past and present, in-school art programs were reduced or completely eliminated in public education under NCLB. “Schools with higher concentrations of poverty are less likely to have dedicated art room with special equipment, and with a difference of about 25% relative to more affluent schools” (Chapman, 2005 p.). Students receive limited opportunities to express their feelings in a general school classroom, due to the structured culture in public schools. Providing expressive opportunities is crucial for students with low resources which can be done by attending a program that I am instructing which is a low cost to free afterschool ceramics program. Students with limited resources may feel embarrassed or ashamed due to standards set by popular culture ideals. Young people inevitably encounter popular imagery on a daily basis, whether that is through social media, television, and physical advertisements, and these encounters shape their self-perception by comparing the self to society. Students in my program will learn about how artist, Roberto Lugo has achieved social commentary through ceramics.

I am also concerned on the misconception that the purpose of ceramics education is to create utilitarian wares and functional pottery. The medium has also been misrepresented as a vase or art object

ornamented for home decoration, art for art's sake. Ceramics is an art form much more complex than common perceptions and attitudes towards the medium. Clay allows its users to communicate through the medium through both sculpture and pottery. Many contemporary artists are using clay to communicate and subvert to social issues.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to experiment with learning strategies derived from the visual culture curriculum to encourage economically disadvantaged students question and criticize societal constructs created by popular culture and the media. I believe that a visual culture curriculum has the possibility to combat the development of poor self-esteem. This research would be helpful to educators who are looking to improve students' self-esteem who are coming from a low economic status and limited financial resources. This information could also be more specific to those who teach in a community program or a non-traditional setting.

The topics of my research include community setting arts programing, visual culture curriculum, ceramics education, the material exploration of clay, and collectively, how these can contribute to building self-esteem. I am investigating ways in which a ceramics class in a community arts setting for K-12 students can be informed by a visual

culture curricular model in order to help students build self-esteem through art making.

The theme of this study has been particularly informed by my knowledge of the work of emerging ceramic artist, Roberto Lugo, whose family emigrated from Puerto Rico to North Philadelphia. Throughout his life, he has felt marginalized by society due to his economic disadvantages. He creates pottery rich with bold imagery about his identity. After being present for many of his artist lectures and hearing his perspective, I realize that students need to be given the chance to create and speak about their artwork and identity which can foster growth of self-esteem being made possible through Olivia Gude's (Gude, 2004) visual culture curriculum. A possible complication is taking time away from the art making to also focus on discussion and displaying artwork, which would mean that the students have less time to complete their art work and it is also requested by the program that I provide as much time as possible for artmaking.

Articles and literature that I have reviewed based on visual culture explain the importance of student discussions and the benefits on presenting current artists or images from popular culture because it can provide students with imagery they will respond to and is more relevant to them. Students will be encouraged to share their own voice and express themselves through their artwork. This theory in art education

allows all students, even the ones who are not the most artistically talented to feel comfortable discussing themes in the works of established artists and their own artwork.

The issue I am investigating is how to incorporate visual culture curriculum to improve the self-esteem of my students who are underserved by exploring ceramics as an artistic medium. My population consists of economically disadvantaged students in a non-profit program for students of all ages. The program gives students the opportunity to participate in the arts especially since many schools in Philadelphia are cutting art programs in schools. Non-profit art programs are a way to compensate for the lack of art in the general education. Currently, students range in ages from elementary to middle school while a few adults attend the class.

In ceramics, the material itself is rich in culture, content and information. Therefore,

“Ceramic objects have frequently demonstrated a purpose beyond merely functional or decorative. If ceramics education is to take a significant place in educating the whole student, then ceramic objects need to be central to curriculum as they can significantly add to “understanding our world and making sense of our experience” (Sessions, 1999).

Ceramics is interdisciplinary as it encompasses culture, subjects, and content and is limitless in expressing emotions and narratives. I plan on gathering data through questionnaires, surveys, documenting the art making process, documenting student artwork, interviewing and audio recording critiques and conversation. Interpreting and discussing artwork can contribute to developing the self-esteem of students. Providing them with the opportunity to participate in using strategies from Visual Thinking Skills, hereinafter known as (VTS), is based on student discussion that can build students' self-esteem through verbal reflection. "VTS can improve literacy skills and personal connections with art, in addition to helping to build self-respect, confidence, and willingness to participate in group activities" (Housen, 2002, pg. 5).

My prior experiences that piqued my interest in writing my thesis on economically disadvantaged students' stems from my childhood of growing up in a single-parent household below the poverty line. I believe growing up with limited financial resources would not have made me a resilient and empathetic individual. I understand that having limited resources can distract and cause students to come to school upset daily, ultimately negatively impacting their academic success.

Due to my personal experiences and observations, students with low-economic status experience challenges such as embarrassment and lack of confidence due to their limited resources. Since I have

experienced the emotional distress and discomfort of being economically disadvantaged, I would like to find strategies to empower these students and encourage them to be proud of whom they are regardless of their background. I feel that applying visual culture pedagogy will encourage students to think critically and question ideals that cause them to feel marginalized by society. Students will be encouraged to share their own voice and express themselves through their artwork. This theory in art education allows all students, even the ones who are not the most artistically talented, feel comfortable discussing themes in the works of established artists and their own artwork.

I am also an advocate for afterschool programs especially for underserved youth because it provides a safe space and stress-free environment for students. Students receive the opportunity to socialize with other children in a supervised, productive, and respectful environment. They have the opportunity to build friendships with others, as the attendance is consistent. Students are also receiving regular positive reinforcement and encouragement on their projects. Since it is an extracurricular activity, the pressures of state testing are eliminated which is another benefit to building self-esteem. Grading student work has been omitted from the program. Students are also learning a new skill that they would not normally be taught in a traditional school setting.

Since I will be teaching ceramics, I also find this medium to very relaxing, meditative and therapeutic. Due to the tactile nature of the material, students will be more engaged and focused. Students are not pressed to create a perfected drawing or to color within the lines as each student's sculpture or pottery will look different. Students will be encouraged to develop their own voice and aesthetic in their ceramic sculptures and pottery.

Current research lacks strategies to improve the self-esteem of underserved youth. Art education has the power to build students' self-esteem, especially in a community setting taking place outside of a regular classroom. It has also come to my attention that research lacks a connection to visual culture and building self-esteem. Literature on ceramics curriculum is also hard to come by especially any based on current education or teaching philosophies. I feel that my research will discover these missing gaps in ceramics education, building self-esteem, and the current visual culture curriculum.

I understand that I will not have any knowledge of the causes of students' low self-esteem as I do not have access or communication to teachers, parents, therapists or other influences in the students' lives outside of my program. I only get to know students through my interactions with them and do not seek information regarding specifics to family situations, income and resources. It is my hope to utilize my

research methods to improve students' self-esteem by exposing students to contemporary artists who practice questioning images artists encounter and subverts against ideas that are considered norms. Collectively, these methods will continue their growth or stability of self-esteem even after my program ends.

Given that students who are economically disadvantaged have a higher risk of low self-efficacy in learning settings (Varghese 2015), how might the visual culture approach to art education that encourages students to become critical consumers of visual imagery impact ways in which curriculum is built and art instruction provided in a community after school ceramics program?

Theoretical Framework

My theory is based on the ideas of visual culture projected by Olivia Gude. I admire her critique or subversion on formalism and how art education curriculum must be altered to be compatible and relevant to the present day. I am creating a practical claim for elementary and middle school students in an after school program setting. My claim is that engaging students can make improvement in students' self-image/efficacy possible in critical discourse through a curriculum based on postmodern principles and visual culture. Even though this practice has not been commonly implemented into the typical public art education

curriculum, it has the potential to create more critical and vocal citizens. With images being plentiful during this day in age, it is important for students to question and think critically of subjects they encounter as not doing so may negatively impact the self-perceptions of children.

The topics of my research are community setting programs, visual culture, ceramics education, the material exploration of clay, and how these all can contribute to building self-esteem. I am investigating ways in which material exploration in ceramics can be based off of a visual culture curriculum to elicit student responses that leads to improved self-esteem. Especially with emerging ceramic artists sharing their personal story such as Roberto Lugo, who is a ceramic artist of Puerto Rican descent from an immigrated family. The artist also grew up in North Philadelphia and has felt marginalized by society due to his economic disadvantages. He creates work about his identity. After being present for many of his artist lectures and hearing his perspective, I realize that students need to be given the chance to create and speak about their artwork and identity which can foster growth of self-esteem and made possible through Olivia Gude's visual culture curriculum.

A possible complication is that displaying artist lectures, facilitating VTS and other discussion-based activities is that my head of program may look down upon the time taken away from the material exploration of working with clay. The program is viewed as a 'fun' skill

for students to learn and that time is meant to be spent working on the projects. I am worried that the program will look down upon a visual culture philosophy since it is so unfamiliar to the founders of my program. The previous instructor focused on functional pottery while I am shifting the focus towards meaning making through art. I will explain to the founder and other staff members the benefits of the visual culture curriculum and how it can benefit the population of students we have enrolled. West Park Cultural Center's goal is to enrich the lives of students with limited financial resources with art and culture that the new curriculum will serve.

The issue I am investigating is how to incorporate visual culture teaching methods to improve the self-esteem of students who are underserved through exploring ceramics as an artistic medium. My population is geared towards economically disadvantaged students in a non-profit program for students of all ages, which gives students the opportunity to participate in the arts since many schools in Philadelphia are cutting art programs in schools non-profit programs are a way to compensate for lack of art in the curriculum. Currently, my class enrollment includes elementary, middle school students and two adults taking the class while accompanying their child. I am also investigating ways in which I can elicit verbal or written student responses to give students the opportunity to express their feelings through their artwork as well as the artwork of classmates and emerging or established

contemporary artists. Through my research, articles based on visual culture explain the importance of student discussions. Visual culture curriculum also discusses the benefits on exposing students to current artists because this strategy can provide students with imagery they will respond to and is more relevant to them. In ceramics, the material itself is rich in culture, content and information therefore,

“Ceramic objects have frequently demonstrated a purpose beyond being merely functional or decorative. If ceramics education is to take a significant place in educating the whole student, then ceramic objects need to be central to curriculum as they can significantly add to “understanding our world and making sense of our experience.” (Sessions, 1999, pg. 8)

Ceramics encompasses culture, other subjects, content and has endless possibilities to express emotions and narratives. Opening up the possibility for diverse populations to connect with the material. Students will be able to speak more about their identity when lessons are structured to encourage discussion of the self.

I have been interested in working with economically disadvantaged students due to my experiences. I grew up with a single mother with limited financial resources; this took a toll on many other aspects of life. Art improved my confidence, self-esteem, and sense of purpose and bettered my outlook and quality of life. I would like to

provide an outlet through art for students who come from a lower socioeconomic status.

Significance of the Study

The research in this study may benefit educators in low-resourced schools and/or professionals or teaching artists who teach students coming from a low socioeconomic status. It is important to understand ways in which to provide students with limited resources an opportunity to have a voice through their artwork. It is common for educators to feel unprepared in specific populations when not exposed to proper teaching strategies designed for the population.

Through Olivia Gude's Postmodern Principles, students can create artwork based on what is most relevant to the students. I would like to empower my students by allowing them to use their voice, express their feelings, and value their opinions. I am intending to improve the field of ceramics education by applying visual culture and meaning making on top of traditional technical skills. Ceramics education is traditionally based on techniques and processes when the art form encompasses much more than technique alone. Ceramics is rich in culture and content. Unfortunately, the culture and content is often excluded in included ceramics courses; this inclusion could enrich the curriculum greatly. Current literature has an absence of research on ceramics courses that are based on a visual culture curriculum. I have also discovered gaps

in research regarding ceramics education in general. Visual culture curriculum taught in an after school and community program that leads to improved self-esteem is also absent in current research and literature.

Limitations of the Study

I will experience time restrictions, as I will meet with students twice per week for two-hour periods. There is also a possibility of cancellations due to holidays and snow days. Currently I have twenty-two students enrolled. I will have several new students on January 17th, possibly double the current enrollment. I do feel pressure to dedicate mass time to artistic production by the program which may take away from the time that I would like to spend on the visual culture component of my curriculum. Another limitation is that some students may be too young to give clear responses when collecting data. I am also limited to this setting as I am focusing on specifically on ceramics instruction.

Definition of terms

Self-esteem- “Researchers have measured global self-esteem in reference to an overall evaluation of self worth” (Pierce, J. 1989).

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)- “Giving students the opportunity to speak and share their perspectives on the artwork of artists, their classmates and their own work” (Heise, D. 2011).

Visual Culture- “Students will participate in a curriculum constructed by Olivia Gude, a curriculum that encourages students to question signifiers in images and social relations of power” (Gude, 2004).

Contemporary craft- In this ceramics course, students will be exposed to a diversity contemporary ceramic artists in both functional and sculptural avenues.

Community setting- “Community art is a practice that believes the production of arts a social activity that expresses people’s lived experience. It is a language of self-representation or self-collaboration through which an individual or a group confirms its identity. Community can be defined as a demographic community, social community or community of interest” (Marsden, 1996).

Assumptions to Be Debated

1. Given that young students from a poverty background find more relevance in contemporary art and popular culture, it will be debated that participating in a visual culture curriculum will improve their self-esteem.

2. Given that students enrolled in low resourced schools have little opportunity to have their voices heard and share what they deem important, it will be debated that a visual culture curriculum will encourage emotional growth.

3. Given that economically disadvantaged students can benefit from community programs, it will be debated because these programs can improve their self-esteem as there is no pressure with grading or assessment which can hinder the growth of self-esteem.

4. Given that the material exploration of clay is a meditative process it will be debated that students can benefit from experimenting with this particular medium.

Assumptions Not to Be Debated

1. Given that many outside factors may influence a student's self-esteem, it will not be debated as I do not have the authority to investigate a student's life at home.

2. Given that a student's performance in school may affect their self-esteem, it will not be debated as I do not have the authority to investigate a student's performance in the regular classroom.

3. Given that a student's IEP may influence a student's self-esteem, it will not be debated as I do not have access to my students' IEP's.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

It has come to my attention that there are gaps in literature in the field of ceramics education. What I have come to find are mostly sources based on traditional curriculum and teaching methods of ceramics. The author Brewer (1991) discusses a more traditional approach while Sessions (1999) discusses various importance within the ceramics field that students can and will learn if curriculum is taught through a present perspective. Students become more interested when presented with representations of current ceramic objects as they are more relevant to our time. I feel that ceramics education can benefit students' self-esteem when taught through a visual culture curriculum in an afterschool community arts program.

Ceramics Curriculum

A study conducted by Brewer was performed to determine which art education curriculum has the most success in student learning. The study compares a child-centered approach to a disciplined based curriculum within an elementary ceramics classroom. The researcher splits a fifth grade class into two different groups and the students are taught through either a child-centered or a disciplined based approach. The judges assessed both groups of student success in categories of self-concept, attitudes toward art and knowledge of art.

The study begins by giving both groups of students a pretest to measure their current scores in the three categories of assessment which includes artistic ability, critique skills and cultural interpretation. The second day both groups were both presented with technical information including vocabulary and hand building techniques to fill any gaps in prior knowledge. The third day the child-centered group activated prior knowledge by questioning and prompting students to reinforce that the project is based on feeling. “How does clay feel to you? Can you make clay into something? What might that be? Can you make clay look happy? Can you make clay look sad?” (Brewer, 1991, p. 200). The project was based on making a clay figure that represents someone that the student knows. Afterwards, students were asked to express their feelings on working with the clay. The child-centered group was not exposed to any historical or contemporary artists prior to working with the material. While in the discipline based group, students were exposed to examples of historical works varying in styles and time of production and discussed works by describing formal elements before working with the clay. Afterwards, the discipline based students’ finished pieces were compared to the masterpieces that they had been exposed to. On the fifth day of the study, students in the discipline based group were shown the slides of historical works again and asked what they remember including the place, time, artist, description, style.. While in the child-centered class, students were asked to discuss their own work-“Tell us about your

sculpture. Who did you choose to represent? Why did you choose this person? Who are they? Why do you admire them? Do you like how it turned out?” (Brewer, 2004, pg. 200)

According to the data collected from the judges in the study, in comparison they did not notice any significant differences between the the child-centered approach and Disciplined Based Art Education approach even though their instructional approaches were very different. I am skeptical on how the judges were able to identify students’ self-concept, attitudes toward art and knowledge of art by only viewing the child’s artwork. I understand that students can prove the level of technical skills they have learned through their artwork but I am not sure how the judges could have measured art appreciation and self-concept through a viewing a child’s artwork. I find aspects of both views of instruction to be important.

In the child-centered class, students were encouraged to talk about their own artwork, which is another method of assessment that could have been utilized to measure how much they have learned. Through a teacher as a facilitator rather than a lecturer form of instruction, helps students learn from each other and provides students with the opportunity to share their opinions. Class discussions of artwork is important in other components of my thesis study such as Olivia Gude and VTS advocates for class discussion about artwork and involving student voice. I also do not understand how the judges could interpret a child’s self-concept

without meeting or observing the child and listening to the student talk about their artwork. The DBAE group viewed historical and contemporary artwork before delving into the experimentation with clay. Exposing students to artwork prior to working with the material has been routine in my instruction because it can also benefit the work of the students depending on the type of artists the teacher wishes to present to their students.

On the other hand, Sessions (1999) supports my beliefs on how a successful ceramics curriculum should be taught from the present perspective. “Contemporary ceramics reflects America, a multicultural, pluralistic society. Our influences, techniques and self-expression come from every period, civilization, culture and geographic location” (Sessions, 1999, p. 9). There are many visual indicators within a ceramic art object that viewers can dissect and interpret meaning. These visual indicators include cultural, social, and interests and ideals important of the artists communicated to the viewer. “The students could learn about living artists and their motivation. The objects would be relevant to the world where they live” (Sessions, 1999, pg. 9). When ceramic art objects are shared with students that possess significant meaning it may positively influence their artwork. Providing class time allotted for collaborative discussion and interpretation, students will be able to reflect and discover issues and ideals important to them, thus influencing the artwork of the student possessing content important to the student. When

a student is being validated for their opinions, it has the potential to build their self-esteem.

Through my developing ceramics curriculum, not only will students gain an understanding of interpreting contemporary works, viewing current works may reference events from the past. Also viewing historic works, may educate students in history. “Ceramics curriculum needs to be merged with the world of information intrinsically connected to past and present ceramic objects. Ceramic objects have frequently demonstrated a purpose beyond being merely functional or decorative” (Sessions, 1999, pg. 8). Ceramics often is associated with the misconception of being purely a decorative vessel with the life of living display in a china cabinet. Either sculptural or functional ceramic objects can reference politics, issues, culture, appreciation of interests and much more, the medium is heavily weighted in content which can be beneficial for students and is also important to the visual culture curriculum.

Visual Culture Curriculum

I strongly believe that visual culture curriculum and principles will inform the students’ ceramic artwork along with promote growth of students’ self-esteem. According to Gude (2004), “These newly discovered postmodern principles are often the fusion of a visual form and a conceptual artmaking strategy. They are hybrids of the visual and

the conceptual” (p. 8). Teaching students to think about the content of art and to view art more conceptually rather than teaching them to only to create a beautiful object or that they can only appreciate pretty or perfect looking artworks. Visual culture motivates students to think visually and conceptually. In my ceramics course based on visual culture curriculum, there will be a meaning making component of the lesson for students to plan the content or conceptual part of their artwork which will be parallel with the techniques, skills and aesthetics of their project. Visual culture has two tracks, one based on content, the other is based on the imagery used to convey that content. Focusing ceramics and art education on a visual culture curriculum can potentially give students ideas on how to conceptualize their own artwork the artwork of others. “Students in a quality art education program gain the capacity to reflect on cultural issues related to the self and society”(Gude, 2004, p. 8). I strongly agree with Gude’s ideas because having students reflect on themselves and society gives students a better understanding of who they are, creating ownership of their identity. Gude also mentions that “curriculum should be based on generative themes that relate to the lives of students” (Gude, 2004, p. 8). as this can also help strengthen the content of their artwork.

Giving students power to question images in popular culture, allows students to develop and express their own opinions. This method will encourage students to reject popular beliefs and norms and accept themselves as individuals. Freire (1970) describes a “culture of silence”

that reflects one's subordinate position. By creating art and telling personal stories, students break through the silence and construct new spaces where all voices are valued and diverse ideas and opinions are celebrated. (Heise, D pg. 43)." By creating a visual culture curriculum, I would like my students to feel proud of who they are regardless of their stance in society.

With an influx of popular culture and media that students are consistently exposed to daily, it is important that "They learn to recognize the cultural choices that underlie even the most mundane moments and actions of everyday life." (Gude, 2004. Pg. 8) Pop culture and the media greatly affect how students perceive themselves. " (Levy) mentions "An art education that incorporates personal reflection and critical inquiry into one's relationships with popular culture can encourage students to uncover the impact of the media's messages on shaping identity" ("Levy, 2006, p. 151). According to Levy, exposure to popular media "sets standards, expectations, ideals, and norms." (Levy), Younger students may automatically accept what is communicated to them through the media and it is important to train them to think critically of imagery presented to them. It is most convenient to chose not to think about an image or the choices an artist, designer, advertising agency, video director, etc. had made when selecting symbols, meanings and imagery during the creating process. Instead, choose to be critical. "Visual culture transits knowledge, language, codes, and values of everyday life. Identity

and meaning are derived through these social constructs” (Heise, 2004, p. 41). Images are so plentiful that we are passive viewers of what is being communicated to us. Adding a component within the curriculum that requires students to apply and make meaning of their work will prepare them to participate in the current society and contemporary art world. “By structuring art projects to introduce students to relevant contemporary art and thus postmodern principles-strategies for understanding and making art today-students will gain the skills to participate in and shape contemporary cultural conversations” (Gude, 2004, p. 8). Students will be able to interpret artworks by looking closely and asking questions instead of passively viewing visual materials which is the attitude they may currently possess towards art and imagery. “The process of viewing works of art and engaging in inquiry-based activities stimulates interesting discussions among students of all ages. Students engage in higher order thinking as they analyze works of art in relation to historical and societal contexts” (Heise, 2004, p. 42). Implementing the teaching methods discussed has the potential to build my students’ self-esteem.

A formalist approach to art education is outdated as the elements and principles are no longer a primary focus in the contemporary art world. The elements and principles also do not encourage students to make meaning of their artwork, interpret imagery and connect to students on a personal level. I feel that formalism “waters down” artmaking when

young students are highly capable of making meaningful artwork. This approach to art education is not engaging for students and often leaves them bored, leaving students with an underestimated impression of what art entails.

How can we encourage students to make meaning in their artwork? The Postmodern Principles can serve as a guide for students to build the content of their artwork. The principles include; appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualization, layering, interaction of text/images, hybridity, gazing, and representing'. (Gude, 2004, pg. 9,10,11) I would like to focus on a specific principle for my curriculum which is representin' because my students will relate to this one principle out of the total of seven. For example, if an assignment were based on representin', a student can brainstorm ideas about their identity and collage different symbols and images by drawing through clay or sculpting a collection together. An assignment that entails aspects of the students' identity allows the student to self-accept and improve their self-esteem. The underlying concepts of the visual culture curriculum began with three themes including:

1. "curriculum based on generative themes that relate to the lives of students and their community" (Gude, 2004, pg. 8).
2. Using "art as investigation- understanding that the art of others and seeing their own artmaking, not as exercises, but as research that produces new visual and conceptual insights" (Gude, 2004, pg. 8). I will

be incorporating the first two themes into my curriculum as the last theme focuses on using a variety of medium.

3. Lastly, “Studio art projects based on diverse practices of contemporary artmaking related to traditional arts” (Gude, 2004, pg. 8) I cannot use diverse materials as my program is a ceramics course, we will only be experimenting with ceramic techniques, excluding painting, printmaking, drawing and other artmaking methods.

Underserved populations

It has been proven that art programs are necessary for students who have limited financial resources. A study conducted through West Chester University tested children’s cortisol levels which is a stress hormone. “When we face stressful or challenging situations, our cortisol is elevated” (Hoffman, 2016). Low income students may have high levels of cortisol due to constant exposure to psychologically stressful experiences which is detrimental to learning. The study found that cortisol levels had lowered after an enrichment course such as music, dance, or visual arts. This information makes enrichment programs even more imperative for low-income students to participate, (Hoffman, 2016).

Afterschool arts programs

Afterschool arts programs can improve the self-esteem of students with limited financial resources. The adults or educators of the programs have more time to dedicate to each student which does not happen in a typical school classroom. It has been reported that “Youth involved in arts programs also report feeling more satisfied and competent than their peers”(Quinn, Kahne, 2001, p. 13). Students enrolled in afterschool arts programs are gaining a skill, contributing to the sense of accomplishment and self-worth which connects to building students’ self-esteem.

“Research on the subject finds that participants benefit from access to a safe and structured environment, from opportunities to pursue interests and develop competencies, and from opportunities to forge supportive relationships with adults”(Quinn, Kahne, 2001, p. 12). Supportive relationships are formed in the program because the present adults are either a parent of a student, a student themselves, volunteers and myself the instructor. Students form positive relationships with myself, other adults in the program and other students through positive reinforcement, validating, and collaborating.

“Artistic expression allows young people several ways to display knowledge and skills, from verbal explanation, to group role-playing, to visual and audio presentation”(Quinn, Kahne, 2001, p. 13). Afterschool arts programs do not require assessment and grading. My curriculum will include group discussions, individualized attention to students, and

critiques or presentations of their artwork. Students are provided with multiple modalities to discuss their knowledge and artworks.

Building self-esteem

I will have students build their self-esteem through two methods. One through the visual culture curriculum and the other will be through task performance. Students with limited resources may experience lower self-esteem. Self-esteem is defined as a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself” (Street, Issacs, 1998, p. 47) My students may enter feeling incompetent in the arts, it is my goal to improve their overall self-esteem through gaining competence in ceramics and self-reflection. Many of my students are unfamiliar with ceramics and have not previously had the opportunity to work with the material. Students quickly realize that this material entails patience, time sensitivity, and attention. My students will be learning a new skill, mastering basic technique and skill in ceramics which will lead to a stronger self-esteem. “Task or situation-specific self-esteem as the self-evaluation that results from behavior in a specific situation and representing a person’s competence in a task just performed” (Kraehe A. and Acuff, J. 2015). Students will be acknowledged for their completion of a project. Many of my beginning students have the misconception or feeling that they are incapable of creating beautiful objects. They are often surprised seeing their project come to life.

Low self-esteem can be caused by societal and environmental influences. Students are regularly confronted with popular imagery that may cause them to feel ashamed by not appearing to a standard or not possessing the latest fashion brands. Making the visual culture curriculum is so imperative to include in my curriculum. Students will be encouraged to question images that are circulating and realize that they do not have to own the same possessions or appear like popular celebrities.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Setting

I will conduct my research study at Microsoft's The School of the Future High School located in West Philadelphia. The afterschool program takes place through the West Park Cultural Center, a nonprofit community program. The program utilizes the high school's art room as they have resources needed for ceramics education such as a large space, projector, sturdy tables, pottery wheels, a kiln, and an abundance of materials necessary for instruction. The School of the Future is a technologically up-to-date, large and modern building. The school's vision is to close the technology gap in urban education and provide our learners with the skills and competencies necessary for problem solving and lifelong learning" (School of the Future, 2017).

West Park Cultural Center was founded in 2001 by Betty Lindley intending to fill a major void in the community. No high quality arts or culture programming was affordable or offered to children, youth and families. The ceramics program was previously taught for nine years by Janice Merendino, a Moore College of Art and Design BFA 1974 and a founding member of The Clay Studio. West Park Cultural Center mission and vision include:

Mission: "West Park Cultural Center promotes a thriving West Park environment by using arts and culture as a central tool that

helps youth tap their creative and academic potential, and where residents can access the arts, education, and other support programs that contribute to their personal development, helping them come together as a strong community.” (Lindley, 2016).

Vision: “West Park Cultural Center will be a community-based resource where children and adults will access the arts and educational opportunities through programs that contribute to their personal development and quality of life. By serving people of all ages and backgrounds, we will create opportunities for neighbors and organizations to know one another and develop connections that create a strong community.” (Lindley, 2016).

The classroom is set up with about seven, large, durable wooden tables. The front table is where I perform my project demonstrations. The four tables on the left hand side of the room, I cover with canvas to protect the surface of the table from the clay and glazes. The two tables on the right hand side of the classroom are not for working with clay. The table closest to the door is where parents may sit while their child is attending class. The table behind the parent table is what I call the “inspiration table.” I have print-outs of contemporary ceramic work for students to reference if they need ideas. I also leave sheets of paper and pencils if students need to sketch ideas.

Participants

My participants vary in age and experience. My participants include a mixture of lower elementary, middle-elementary, middle school students and 2 adult students. Collectively, I teach twenty-two students with the possibility that the roster may double in student enrollment. The varying ages can be challenging but it is also a strength for a community program as we can all work together and transfer knowledge to one another. Approximately more than half of the participants in the program are transported to the program site from ACE Charter Elementary School. Students from the charter school range in 1st-4th grades. I work with my students twice per week for two and a half hour periods.

Researcher Role

In my role, I will be a participant-researcher since I have been employed by West Park Cultural Center to teach ceramics to these students. My role is related to the research site and participants since I will be instructing course content, facilitating class discussions, and interviewing and surveying students.

I will conduct my one-on-one interviews at the inspiration table. This table is in the corner of the room, the opposite side where other students are working. This will prevent other students from overhearing our conversations and also makes the student I am interviewing more comfortable with their responses. I will inform my participants/students by explaining that I am a graduate student

conducting a study about how making ceramics can improve their self-esteem. I will send permission slips home for parents to sign if they agree for their child to be interviewed.

Ethical considerations/Biases

I built a trusting relationship with my students by creating a safe space for the class. On the first day, reviewed what it means to create a safe space, not just physical safety but emotionally as well. We will make a list and I am looking for students to list ways to make others feel comfortable or valued. This includes sharing perspective, seeking to understand each other, being kind, take others seriously, listen, respecting others, valuing everyone's voice. I feel that this will create trusting relationships between the students and teacher. I think that my research will also help me better understand my students.

As I am a researcher, I would like to be perceived as someone who wants to find ways to help my students to improve their self-esteem.

I am worried that I will get too caught up with students learning skills, techniques and producing quality work over research. I have limited time with the students and need to make sure I have a good balance between performing research and teaching what is required of me.

Another bias is that I may make assumptions about students that I have experienced in my own life.

Research Methods

Type of Study

Today, many schools are cutting art programs in low-income school districts due to NCLB. Students need art in their lives in order to understand themselves, improve their quality of life and better their self-esteem. I would like to find the best methods to emotionally and intellectually support my underserved students in a society that looks down upon people with limited resources which causes poor self-esteem in our youth. I believe that in combination, the material exploration of clay; ceramics education; an afterschool program; a community setting; and a curriculum based on the ideals of Gude' visual culture curriculum collectively contribute to improving the self-esteem of my students.

If students do not engage in self-esteem improving practices, they may face a lifetime of embarrassment and feeling ashamed due to having limited financial resources. This research study will investigate strategies to improve children's self-esteem through artmaking. It is important to encourage students to question and think critically of images they regularly encounter to aid in improving their self-esteem. I find that including a visual culture will connect or relate to students in ways that other methods cannot.

Pre and Post Interviews

The research methods that I plan on using are semi-standard one-on-one interviews as I will form questions that are open-ended and able to adapt the question to the individual. It may be limiting that participants may give short or one-word answers instead of fully describing an answer in detail. To remedy this issue, I can use probes to encourage students to continue describing or explaining their answers.

I will ask students the same questions on the second day of class as the last day of class. Proposing same questions in the pre and post study will allow me to compare the pre and post interview responses to measure their growth in self-esteem. I will most likely have to alter the question to the understanding of the student since I teach varying ages of students.

Pre and Post Group Discussions

I also plan on conducting focus group discussions/interviews. “The interviewer should be “flexible, objective, empathetic, persuasive, a good listener” (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 652). The interviewer must play the part as a mediator and encourage reserved participants to speak as the more comfortable students may dominate the conversation. We do not want to miss out on anyone’s perspectives as the class can benefit from each person’s opinion. I also feel that I will be able to gain diverse perspectives especially since the community program serves students of varying ages. All participants can benefit by the presence and the transferring of knowledge to different points in human development or age. Students will become familiar with one

another as I will have consistent participants, making the group discussion more comfortable. “The moderator’s task is not to disturb the participants’ own initiative but rather to create an open space in which the discussion keeps going, first through the exchange of arguments.” (Flick, 2002) I must be cognizant not to interfere too often with the conversation and allow it to flow naturally. Flick also suggests the use of texts and images to stimulate discussion.

Pre and Post Surveys

I also plan on using surveys as well. Some problems will arise with surveys as some of my students are young and have a difficult time reading and writing as they are just learning to read and write. I worry that this will upset my smaller students. Benefits of surveying will include gaining perspectives of reserved students as some students may be too nervous or anxious to speak up in front of group or another person. I find that writing and surveying works best with nervous middle school students as they sometimes are afraid to ask questions or speak up in front of peers.

Observations

Through my observations, I will listen to student interactions and conversations. I will record information that I find relevant to my study. I find observations to be the most natural and least staged out of the data collection methods. I am the instructor, therefore the students are used to

my presence and will be comfortable. Another benefit of observing is that I can instruct the whole class, individual students, groups of students at a table and record interactions that had taken place. I think this will alleviate any pressure from the student.

Limitations

The research of my study takes place in a natural environment because I will be interacting with students face-to-face in their original context. I teach the students twice per week for two and a half hour long periods. The fall semester recently ended and a new term will begin on January 17th with many new students. Time would be one limitation of my study as I am required to devote a majority of the class time towards ceramics instruction and time given to students to produce artwork. I could resolve this by having students answer a few questions per class instead of several at once when surveying, collecting data and interviewing. Another limitation is that I am concerned about the younger students being able to express themselves through written and verbal responses as a few are in lower grades. The collection of data will come from many forms such as surveys, artist statements, observation, verbal interviews, questionnaires, and group discussions.

Data Collection

Context of Study

The purpose of my study is to build the self-esteem in students who come from underserved populations. I am the only instructor at this site. Establishing a trusting relationship with my students is essential in this study to receive honest responses and willingness to participate in the study. I facilitated a safe space by setting rules and expectations by emphasizing to respect, listen and validate one another. I utilized Olivia Gude's Postmodern Principle, Representin' (Gude, 2004) to allow students to express themselves and gain confidence through visual culture teaching strategies. I plan on implementing these research methods by including the postmodern principles, representin', as an introductory step of the planning stage of the ceramic project. I will make sure that students know their responses in interviews and surveys are confidential. One-on-one interviews will take place in a secluded area of the classroom away from other students to make the participants more comfortable sharing honest answers.

Literature Sources

The literature I have studied mainly collects data through photographing student work and artifacts. Brewer (1991) compares two groups of different teaching methods through visual data by photographing student artwork. This is one way to document the

progression of skills and to help the reader visualize the research project. However, I feel that more than documenting artwork is needed to measure students' growth in self-esteem. I find that student verbal and written responses are more fitting for my study as viewing artwork does not give evidence of an improvement in students' self-esteem. That is the reason why I will be collecting data through various methods such as audio recording group and individual interviews. I will be collecting written surveys and student artist statements. I will also be documenting student artwork as artifacts as well as observations. I feel that applying a variety of data collection methods best supports my study.

Methods of Data Collection

Data collection will occur in through various methods to achieve honest responses from a diversity in development and age. Collecting data at different points in time during the study will allow me to see the progress and growth in student self-esteem. Pre and post collection of data will allow me to measure growth in student self-esteem which allows me to find dramatic differences. I will be able to compare data from the beginning of the study to the end to find differences in student responses. I am choosing to audio record to protect student identities, shield the class from distraction, and lessen anxieties of being seen through a camera. I will not be video recording as it could potentially be a major distraction to the class.

Observations will be ongoing throughout the study as any interaction I may have could contribute to the data collection. I am constantly interacting with students, visiting different tables, and assisting students with projects and relocating around the classroom. While I am assisting students, I notice the surrounding students interactions and discussions. I am the instructor and am constantly speaking with students that observations will be the most natural and less obvious form of data collection.

Group discussions/interviews would be fitting for a community program for students of all ages. I feel that the exchanging of differing perspectives will be beneficial to all students because this allows for students of different ages to learn from one another. I plan on audio recording group discussions based on contemporary artwork. I may ask questions like: Who is the artist depicting? Why did they choose to depict that person? What symbols do you see and what do they mean? What are they wearing and what does their clothing signify? What material possessions do you see illustrated in the painting/sculpture/vase?

One-on-one interviews will occur as a pre and post measurement to find differences in the development of self-esteem over the duration of the semester. I will conduct a verbal interview starting the second day of the class as well as the last day of class. There will be about a four-month period in between the verbal interviews. I am planning on spending about five to ten minutes interviewing each student. I will be conducting semi-

structured interviews by asking open-ended questions that the participant will be able to answer without having any prior knowledge. Collecting verbal data, specifically interviews is necessary as some of my students are not old enough to clearly write a response on paper. Many of my students are at an early age and have difficulty and are intimidated by spelling and writing. I would be wasting time if I depended on non-verbal data because it would be time consuming to help each student write a response. If I eliminated verbal data from my study, I would have a difficult time retrieving clear responses. I will ask questions regarding how the student perceives themselves and if they feel that they have grown as an artist. It is also recommended through the visual culture curriculum that students chose the course material. I will ask students what works of Roberto Lugo they enjoyed the most from the slideshow. The interviews will take place away from where students are working.

Physical artifacts will be collected including surveys, photographs of student artwork, and written student artist statements. I deem that providing my readers with a visual reference to be important to better visualize my written descriptions. This will also allow the viewer to see the progress in the student. Other artifacts will include lesson plans, PowerPoint slides and images of contemporary artists work I had shown students and discussed. Saving lesson plans will allow the reader to understand how the classes were conducted. The PowerPoint slides of

contemporary ceramic artists will give the reader context when referring to the lesson plan.



Process/content diagram
Inquiry into Visual Arts Including the Moral
Perspectives

	SELECTION	DESCRIPTION & ANALYSIS	INTERPRETA-TION	EVALUATION	CONNECTIONS
CULTURAL/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	What am I going to choose to study?	What does the form of this work say about its context?	What did it mean in its time & culture?	Why is this work important?	What connections can I make to other times, places & cultures?
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE	Is this interesting to me?	What are the elements & content of the work?	How am I reacting to this & why?	How good do I think this is?	What connections can I make to other experiences?
AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE	Is this art?	What are the ways we can approach art?	How does art make meaning?	Is this good?	How does art relate to life?
TECHNICAL & CREATIVE PERSPECTIVE	What decisions am I making?	What am I creating?	What am I trying to say?	Does this work?	What connections can I make to my art & why?
MORAL PERSPECTIVE Access to Learning for All	Do my choices provide access for all my students?	Am I providing multiple approaches to the arts for my students?	Do my lessons allow for multiple understandings through arts integration?	Do my lessons reflect my valuing a variety of arts experiences for my students?	Does my arts integration include all individual students in a learning community?
MORAL PERSPECTIVE Nurturing Pedagogy	Do my choices provide my students with a safe learning environment?	Are my students experiencing success learning in & through the arts?	Do my teaching methods allow students to engage in rich understandings at a variety of levels?	Do I maintain appropriately high expectations for all students in my lessons?	Do my lessons model democratic processes?
MORAL PERSPECTIVE Stewardship of the Schools	Do my choices allow students to feel ownership of their learning?	Is this learning experience going to make a difference in the way my students perceive the world?	Do my lessons encourage students to see a larger view of the world?	Do my lessons help my students find value in the arts & culture?	Do my lessons using arts integration confront real world issues?
MORAL PERSPECTIVE Enculturation of Youth in a Social & Political Democracy	Do my choices help my students participate in the democratic process?	Do my lessons help students comprehend the balance between the individual & the community?	Do my lessons help students to develop informed interpretations?	Do my lessons help my students value the balance between the individual & the community?	Do my lessons help students understand democracy is not a natural form of human interaction & must be learned & practiced?

Figure 1: The diagram retrieved from (Heise, 2004, pg. 44), shows examples of the types of questions I would like to form for my students to answer especially in group discussions and interviews.

Limitations

Some limitations of my data collection methods include limited production of artwork, interviews being conducted only twice during the study, and observations are limited as they will only be recorded if I am present when an interaction is taking place. Over the course of the semester, students will produce three or four projects. I plan on limiting interviews and surveys to a pre and post assessments to hopefully find dramatic differences by comparing data from the start of the semester to the end.

Data Analysis

Organization

I plan on organizing my data by creating a folder for each student to keep track of their progress. I find that having a hard copy or a physical object printed and organized into a file will work best for me. Inside of each student's folder will contain surveys, sketches and written artist statements or student explanations of their artwork and photographs of student artwork. I will type and print out interviews that has been audio recorded for the sake of staying organized. I will also create an electronic backup or copy for my audio recordings incase any

electronic devices of mine are destroyed by accident. The files will be confidential and locked in a file cabinet.

Coding of Data

After reading through collected data, I plan on color coding my data according to themes in levels of how drastic the difference in self-esteem growth. I will color code these in a stop-light order. On the outside of the folder, I will place a sticker depending on how much the student has claimed to have increased self-esteem. Green will indicate the most improvement in self-esteem. While yellow signifies that the student has somewhat improved self-esteem. Red will signify students who did not experience a difference in self-worth or felt a decrease in self-esteem. This system will provide me with data on the effectiveness of the study.

Methods of Analysis

By collecting a variety of methods of retrieving data, this allows for all ages and abilities to respond to a survey. My decision for including multiple modalities of expression in my data collection is influenced by Universal Design for Learning.

CHAPTER IV: DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

Overview

Title: Implementing a visual culture curriculum for underserved populations in an afterschool ceramics program.

Research question: Given that students who are economically disadvantaged may have low self-esteem in learning settings (Varghese 2015), how might the visual culture approach to art education that encourages students to become critical consumers of visual imagery impact ways in which curriculum is built and art instruction provided in a community after school ceramics program?

Throughout my study, I collected data through written surveys with open-ended questions, observations, documentation of student artwork and interviews. My study took place over an eight-week period where students were introduced to foundational ceramic techniques, contemporary ceramic artists, and elicited meaning-making in the craft form. Students produced meaningful sculptural and functional pottery. Throughout the study students were provided with a low-fire stoneware clay to create sculptural objects of meaning. I chose to order the projects in a specific way to provide scaffolding for following projects.

Memory project: This project was based on preserving a memory into clay that required students to carve an illustration into a platter or plate form. I instructed students to draw a favorite or pleasant memory onto their platter. We discussed how art tells us a story. Inquiry based questions: “If a story lacked words, could you still tell what was happening by the illustrations?” How can we show a viewer what is happening in our story?” I modeled my thinking by speaking aloud before demonstrating the techniques. I exemplified my planning to illustrate a childhood memory of mine. I told my students about how my grandfather and I would return cans to buy donuts together when I was a little girl. I drew my grandfather in a wheelchair and myself sitting across from him at a table, a can redemption machine and a donut cabinet within a general grocery store setting. I told students not to worry if their drawings were not perfect and that imperfect drawings are actually more interesting. I told my students that my illustration is not perfect and that I am still happy with the result. I demonstrated a beginner’s hand-building technique of creating a slab, considering thickness and time-sensitive wet to dry stages of clay. Students learned about firing and glazing.

I chose to begin with meaning making onto a platter as it was a project that a first-time student could technically handle. This technique also boosted their self-confidence because a slab can be easily rolled and placed into a mold, take the shape of the mold and then be carved into. I began with a project based on memory to introduce students into the habit of producing artwork that possess some type of meaning or personal significance.



Figure 2: Student plate with a wheelchair illustration carved into the surface.

I learned that one student enjoys helping others. She drew a large carving of a wheelchair onto her plate and told me her favorite memory was when she took care of her grandpa when he was in a wheelchair and that her mom works at a nursing home. She hopes to help people just like her mom when she grows up.

Reflective Self-portrait:

Prior to this lesson, I introduced students to the artist Roberto Lugo along with dissecting various aspects of identity in order to expose students to a contemporary artist who they can relate. Aspects of identity

includes someone's culture, appearance, interests/likes, goals/future.

When presenting each slide to students, I gave students a description of his artwork and asked the students, "How does this have anything to do with Roberto Lugo's identity?" When presenting the slideshow of the artist's work one student noticed, "*I can see the Puerto Rican flag*" (Class interview, February 2017). I responded by saying "*How does that relate to the artist's identity?*" My students replied with "*culture*" (Class interview, February 2017). This is evidence that she learned the material covered from the lesson. My students were really excited about his work and interrupted by asking, "*how do I know so much about his work, do I know him personally?*" (Class interview, February 2017)

In order for students to understand that artwork is self-reflective, I chose to present Lugo's artworks themed on identity and self-acceptance. The portrait making component of this project is a more advanced technique compared to prior projects. I had previously taught high school courses on ceramic self-portrait sculpture and it was even a challenge for older students. I was worried that students would give up due to the difficulty of the assignment. I broke down the creation of the face into small steps to cater to the elementary age group and beginning ceramics students.

Below are the steps listed:

Step 1: The base of the face consisted of a round ball of clay, flattened.

The eyes were created by pushing into the clay to form eye sockets. Make

two small balls for the eyes and place them into the socket. Each eye ball gets two coils. One for the upper and another for the lower lid.

Step 2: With your fingers pinch a small piece of clay into a triangle shape to create the nose, attach to face.

Step 3: “How would we make the mouth or lips?” The students responded and said that you could use two coils and they were correct.

I told the students that we’re going to make a self-portrait. I structured the lesson differently this time by breaking up the demonstrations instead of giving them all the information at once. I demonstrated how to make the base of the face and the eyes first, gave them 10 minutes to make their eyes. I gathered students around to demonstrate how to make the nose, sent them back to seats for 5 minutes to complete the nose. The same for the mouth. Since they had already used coils to make features for the first few steps, I asked them how they think it was made. One student said two coils can make the lips, she was right! I felt that having a more structured lesson significantly increased productivity. Limiting time spent on one step kept them focused. They completed an entire face in just one class period!



Figure 3: Student created clay head. It

shows the understanding of the process.

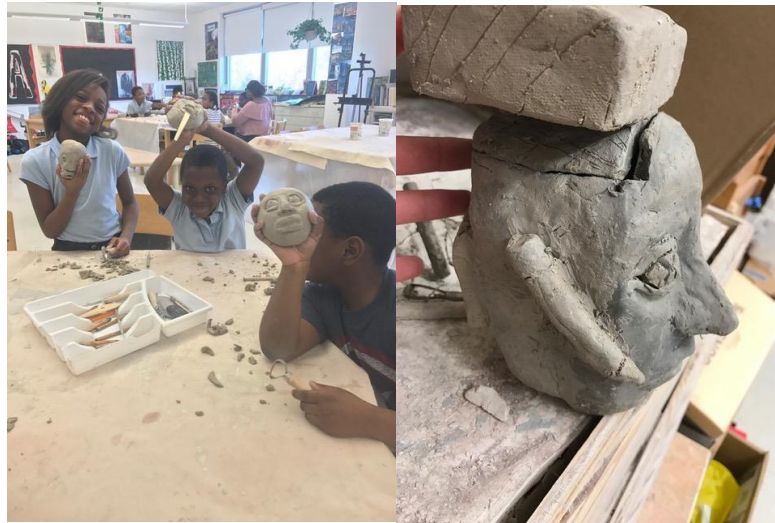


Figure 4: Example of one students head before firing. Evidence of student success before firing. Understanding process, add-on technique, and implementation of identity

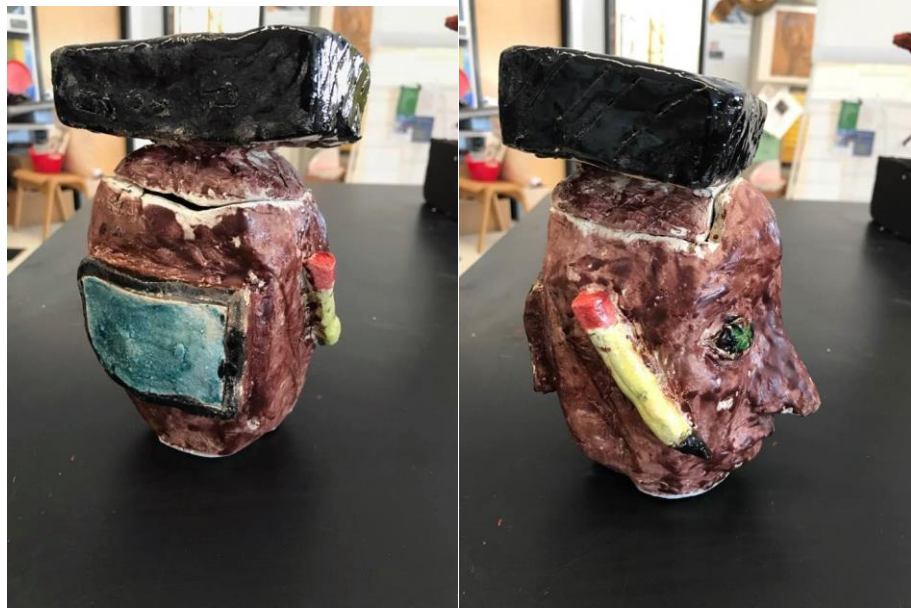


Figure 5: Demonstrates student understanding of the assignment including the implementation of identity and personal interests.

I instructed the students to cut the top of the head to transform into a lid for their self-portrait jar. We reviewed the concept of identity and viewed the work of Roberto Lugo again and focused on his “Add-on” sculptures that he adds to his self-portraits. I passed out a planning sheet for the student to select an aspect of their identities they wish to focus on along with a space for them to sketch their idea of Add-ons to include.

This assignment presented a challenge to some students. One parent suggested that I theme the next project that would closely relate to the students. The parent suggestion influenced me to create a Black History and Women’s History assignment.

Black history and women's history project:

The final project was focused on Black History and Women's history. The students created a ceramic cylinder and illustrated a portrait of a person of color or a woman onto their vessel. Again, I presented works by Roberto Lugo for the vessel project. Through a slideshow, I presented Lugo's vessels which depicts influential people of color. He illustrates a portrait of a person of color and frames the portrait with patterns, drawings, juxtaposed with graffiti onto a wheel thrown vessel of Victorian form. He illustrates influential people such as Martin Luther King Jr., Bell Hooks, Basquiat, Obama and more. Attending Roberto Lugo's lectures myself, he has noted the positive impact of students being exposed to artists who reflect their own culture and heritage. Lugo has discussed that there are not enough black artists, not enough people of color represented in the art world, and are often excluded. I feel that the students could relate to Lugo, he has some commonalities with the students as he is also a person of color and from Philadelphia.

Figure 6: Shows evidence that students enjoyed the artist. (March, 2017)

What do you think about the artist Roberto Lugo? (7 responses)

He is cool self jar
Because he is the best artist ever including Ms. C. His work was decent.
He liked his self portrait
He is good
I think he is an amazing person because hes an good artist.
He was good
No answer

Two students drew a portrait of Martin Luther king. I asked why she chose to illustrate him. “Martin Luther King. Because people were not treated equally.” “He is a social activist (MLK)” Another student illustrated “Alicia Keys-because she is famous.”

Figure 7: Shows student responses to the figure they chose to depict.

(Student Survey, March 2017)

What do you like about the person you drew on your cylinder? (7 responses)

She is cute
Because he was the social activist
Famous-Alica Keys
I did it well
Martin Luther King because people were not treated equally.
I liked it because it was my Dad
No answer



Figure 8. Shows evidence of a successfully constructed ceramic cylinder and illustration of Barack Obama.



Figure 9: . Shows evidence of a successfully

constructed ceramic cylinder and illustration of bell hooks.

Data Analysis

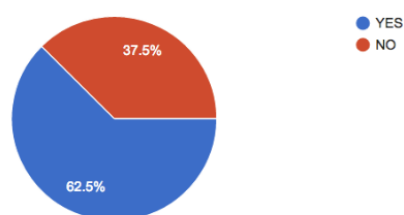
Data collection methods including written responses, questionnaires and surveys which provided a better understanding of what my students have learned throughout the session. These methods of collecting data allowed me to recognize patterns and growth from my students throughout the study. Being a teacher-researcher, it allowed me to observe their growth of self-esteem over time.

Pre-Assessment Data Analysis

During the pre-assessment surveys, I asked students if they think their art should reflect who they are. Approximately 40% responded with a NO. One of my goals of from the study is for students to learn about visual culture in art education as the visual culture curriculum strives to encourage students create artwork that is self-reflective as it may increase their self-acceptance. This survey was given before introducing students to Roberto Logo's work. Many students believe that art should not be self-reflective.

Figure 10: This demonstrates students thoughts on whether artwork should be self-reflective before the research study took place.

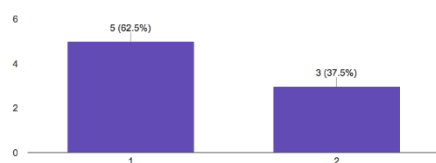
I think my art should reflect who I am. (8 responses)



So far approximately 63% of students felt more relaxed at an afterschool program during the day. It is my goal for students to feel more comfortable after participating in my research study.

Figure 9

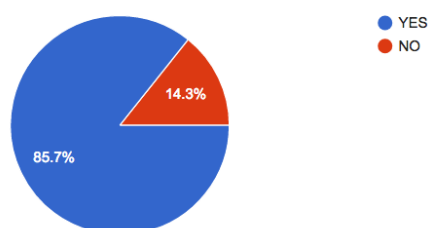
I feel more relaxed at an afterschool program compared to during the day.
(8 responses)



Another focus in my study was the fact that community programs can foster the growth in the child's self-esteem. In the beginning of the session, approximately 86% of students answered that making friends in the after-school program improves their mood. A community setting and an afterschool program can improve the growth of self-esteem in students by building friendships with classmates.

Figure 10

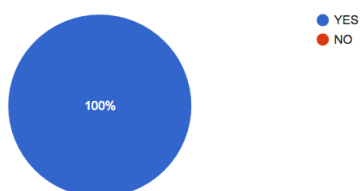
Making friends in the after school program improves my mood. (7 responses)



Students also demonstrated that working with clay puts them at ease. The figure below demonstrates that 100% of the students claimed that they felt that “ceramics takes their mind off of things,” that could relate to anything from problems at school or home.

Figure 11

Ceramics takes my mind off of things. (8 responses)

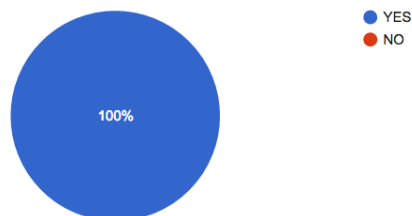


Post Assessment

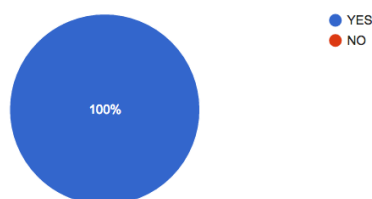
During the post assessment, I asked students similar questions in order to measure the results of their growth in self-esteem. Since I have a younger student population, I phrased the statements or questions in a way that they can understand. Asking students what their preferences are also gave insight to the data collection. During the verbal interview, students expressed that they feel “let loose” and “calm down” after the school day when coming to afterschool ceramics. Another student expressed that “no one can tell her if her work is ugly or wrong” (Verbal interview. May 2017)

Figure 12: These two graphs show that all students enjoy the community setting and that spending time with the friends they made in the program improves their mood.

I enjoy the community setting. (9 responses)



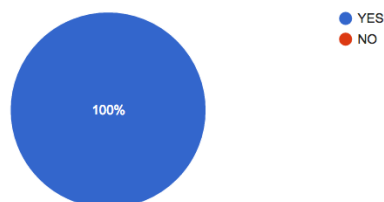
Being around friends in the class improves my mood. (9 responses)



This figure shows that students do enjoy the community setting. Students see the same people each class, students share equipment, tools, materials and the space. During the verbal interview a few students mention that they enjoy getting to know kids from other grades. The students mentioned that they feel more relaxed. They also mentioned that environment feels calm because I do not yell at them like their teachers do during the day.

Figure 13: The graph demonstrates that all of my students appreciated Roberto Lugo's artwork.

I enjoyed looking at social activist artists such as Roberto Lugo. (9 responses)



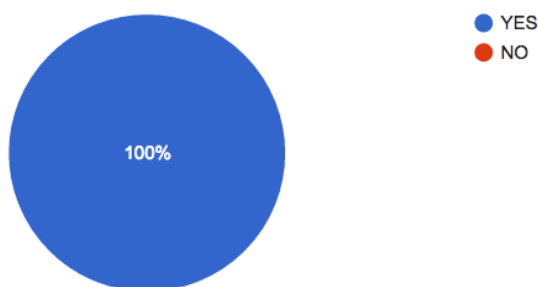
During my post-assessment verbal interview, a few students expressed that they appreciate that Roberto Lugo is “amazing” because he is “not afraid to show his true

self”, “he struggled with a lot of stuff”, “not prove himself”, talks about his “childhood”, “cares about others and how he wants things to change”. (Personal/verbal interviews)

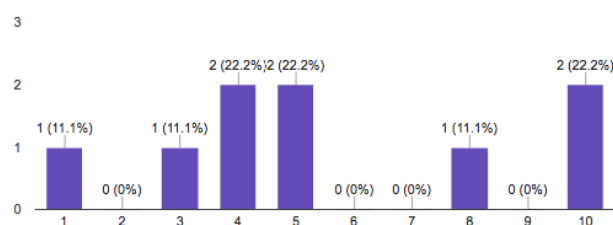
The two figures below demonstrate that all students feel more confident after taking the class. This class included a memory illustration platter, self-reflective self-portrait, and a black history project.

Figure 14 and 15: Students expressed during the verbal interview that “everyone says nice things about their work” influencing their confidence to increase.

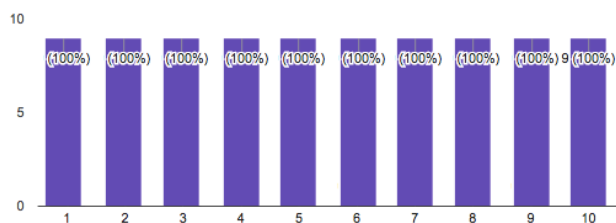
I feel more confident after taking this class. (9 responses)



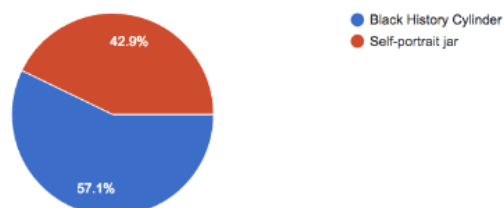
On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident were you as an artist BEFORE taking ceramics? (9 responses)



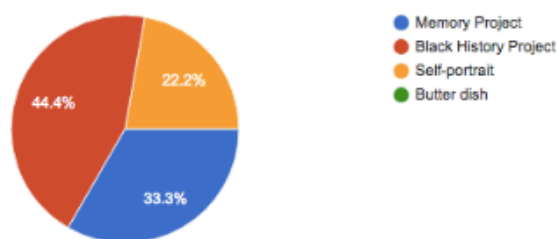
On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you as an artist NOW? (9 responses)



Which project made you feel more accomplished? (7 responses)



Which project is your most favorite (9 responses)



Figures 16 and 17

I received mixed results on which project they felt more proud of or accomplished. However, most students said that they preferred or favored the black history project out of the three projects from this semester. The project was technically more manageable than the self-portrait project and they were able to choose which person to depict on their cylinder. While in the self-portrait project, the assignment was limited to creating their own portrait.

Findings

Throughout the student responses, students showed growth in self-esteem by expressing improvement in many different themes from my thesis. Students felt supported and accepted into the community program by their peers and

volunteers. Students expressed that they felt more confident as an artist after taking my course. The visual culture curriculum was also more relevant to my students. The artist of focus, Roberto Lugo, was very motivating for students to discuss and interpret his ceramic sculptures and pottery.

CHAPTER X: CONCLUSION

The action research study that I implemented proves that a visual culture curriculum gave students a voice, made them feel respected, they felt moved by the contemporary artists they were exposed to, and overall built their self-confidence as artists, students and people.

My students responded well to the artist of focus, Roberto Lugo, and his work. They found his work to be inspirational. They all connected and could relate to him and his artwork. Visual culture curriculum and focus on a contemporary artist exposed them to relevant information. I also noticed a boost in their confidence due to the nature of the community program and supportive environment created by peers, volunteers and myself.

If I were to conduct the study again, I would collaborate with another ceramic artist. Ideally, I would have brought the students to a museum to see his work in person because the Delaware Contemporary was exhibiting Lugo's work. I also think that it would have been effective if I had given the students the opportunity to meet Roberto Lugo or invite him in for an artist talk. I also wish that I had more time allotted to improve the quality of student work. I also wish that I had planned a different project for the first assignment which was the illustrating a memory onto a platter. Instead, I would have had each project based on the works of Roberto Lugo, just as I had done for the following projects which includes black history and women's history cylinder and reflective self-portrait.

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APPENDIX A

Name: _____

I feel more relaxed at an after school program compared to the school day. Yes No

Ceramics takes my mind off of things.

Yes No

I think my art should reflect who I am.

Yes No

I can express myself through my art.

Yes No

I feel better if I think I am doing a good job on my art.

Yes No

I feel like I am becoming a better artist.

Yes No

Making friends in the afterschool program improves my mood.

Yes No

Why do people make art?

APPENDIX B

Name:

Which project were you more proud of?

Cylinder or Self-portrait jar

Which project made you feel more accomplished?

Cylinder or Self-portrait jar

Which project did you like better? Why?

What do you like about the person you drew on your cylinder?

What do you think about the artist Roberto Lugo?

APPENDIX C

Name: _____

I feel calmer after ceramics class. Yes or No

Clay makes me feel calmer more than other art materials. Yes or No

I enjoyed looking at social activist artists such as Roberto Lugo. Yes or No

I enjoy the community setting. Yes or No

Being around friends in the class improves my mood. Yes or No

I feel more confident after taking this class. Yes or No

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident were you as an artist BEFORE taking ceramics?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6/9 had shown drastic improvements

On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you as an artist NOW?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- Star your favorite project from this semester.
- Circle your second favorite.

-Drawing a memory onto a platter/bowl.
cylinder

-Black history and Women's history

-Self-portrait

APPENDIX D**ART EDUCATION PROGRAM****West Park Cultural Center****PERMISSION SLIP**

January 7, 2016

Dear Parent / Guardian,

We are contacting you to request permission for your child, _____, to participate in a special project through West Park Cultural Center. Christen Sanderson, a Masters student at Moore College of Art & Design, is conducting a research project examining the benefits of ceramics education and its impact on self-esteem.

This project will be conducted in-class, during the afterschool program, and will not impact time devoted to other academic subjects. The results of the study will not be published, and will only be shared within the academic community of Moore College of Art & Design. Your child's identity will be kept anonymous, as will the school name and location. In addition, IEP records will be not be shared with Ms. Christen Sanderson.

The project will involve eight to ten two hour sessions over the next two months. Participating students will have to opportunity to engage in creating ceramic objects such as pottery and sculpture. Students will also

view reproductions of current artworks and be asked to respond to a series of questions. Responses will be audio-recorded only, and be measured for their opinion on improved self-esteem. Your child's artwork will be photographed. Photographs or video of your child will be taken at any time.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Christen Sanderson at (315) 297-6377. **Should you wish your child to participate, please sign and return this form to the classroom teacher no later than January 16, 2016.** Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

**PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN TO THE CLASSROOM
TEACHER NO LATER THAN MARCH 16**

I, _____
do hereby give permission for my child,

Parent / Guardian Name

_____ to
participate in a special project at WPCC.

Student Name

Parent / Guardian
Signature

APPENDIX E

INFORMED ASSENT FOR STUDENTS OVER 18

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates ways ceramics instruction can improve students' self-esteem through a visual culture curriculum. It is hoped valuable information on how to best structure art education for students will be revealed throughout the course of this study. For this study, you will participate in research sessions over the course of 14 weeks during class time. These sessions are additional opportunities to engage with and possibly make art beyond your existing art class. Participation will not impact your regular school schedule. I will not be asking to view any personal information such as IEPs, student records, or behavior programs. Photographs, video, and audio recordings will provide information that I will use in writing my dissertation and the audio recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of my study. This study will take place at The School of the Future in a classroom designated for the study and I, Christen Sanderson, will conduct the research study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There will be no effect on your standing or grades should you decide not to participate in this study. Therefore, you will not be singled out or pulled out from any of the activities if you chose not to participate in the study and/or the art making experiences. The research has the same amount of risk you will encounter during a usual art or classroom activity. However, you may feel shy engaging with a new person or a new type of activity. If this occurs or if you feel uncomfortable at any point in this study, special arrangements can be made, and/or you can pull out of the study without penalty or repercussions. The benefits from the study include positively affecting your participation in art, both in terms of enhancing your child's self-esteem through creating and conversing about art. It is also hoped that I will learn through the study more about how to provide a supportive arts learning environment that will influence ceramics instruction for an afterschool arts program.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: Subject's confidentiality will be preserved. I am the sole researcher of this study.

For the collation, analysis and reporting of all data, all of the participants will be assigned a pseudonym to prevent individuals from being identified. The school name will also be changed. Any charts used in my dissertation or presentations will be coded. All the data that I collect for this research project will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of my dissertation. I will reserve the right to use the data and photographs of student artwork but the students' identify will continue to remain confidential.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation in the study will take approximately 14 weeks and will take place during the afterschool program.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of the study will be used in drawing conclusions from the investigation on how ceramics instruction can improve the self-esteem of students while being taught through a visual culture curriculum. The study will be reported in the form of a thesis, which serves to fulfill my requirements for a master's degree in Art Education.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

Principal Investigator: Christen Sanderson

Research Title: The Impact of Creating Ceramics through a Visual Culture Curriculum in an afterschool program and contribute to improving self-esteem.

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in this research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.

- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (732)567-5535.
- If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Moore College of Art & Design Art Education Department University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- If audio recording is part of this research,
 - I () consent to being audio recorded.
 - I () do NOT consent to being audio recorded.

The written, artwork and audio taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator, inter-rater scorers, and members of the program faculty.

- Written, artwork, and audio taped materials,
 - () may be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.
 - () may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.
 - () may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Name: _____

If necessary:

Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to

_____ (participant's name) in age-appropriate language.

He/She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and he/she provided the affirmative agreement (i.e. assent) to participate in this research.

Investigator's Signature:

Date: _____

APPENDIX F

INFORMED CONSENT FOR STUDENTS

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates ways ceramics instruction can improve students' self-esteem through a visual culture curriculum. It is hoped valuable information on how to best structure art education for students will be revealed throughout the course of this study. For this study, you will participate in research sessions over the course of 2-4 months during class time. These sessions are additional opportunities to engage with and possibly make art beyond your existing art class. Participation will not impact your regular school schedule. I will not be asking to view any personal information such as IEPs, student records, or behavior programs. Photographs, video, and audio recordings will provide information that I will use in writing my dissertation and the audio recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of my study. This study will take place at The School of the Future in a classroom designated for the study and I, Christen Sanderson, will conduct the research study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Participation in the study is completely voluntary. There will be no effect on your standing or grades should you decide not to participate in this study. The dialogues around art works and the art making experiences for the study will be the same for all the students in study. Therefore, you will not be singled out or pulled out from any of the activities if you chose not to participate in the study and/or the art making experiences. The research has the same amount of risk you will encounter during a usual art or classroom activity. However, you may feel shy engaging with a new person or a new type of activity. If this occurs or if you feel uncomfortable at any point in this study, special arrangements can be made, and/or you can pull out of the study without penalty or repercussions. The benefits from the study include positively affecting your participation in art, both in terms of enhancing your child's self-esteem through creating and conversing about art. It is also hoped that I will learn through the study more about how to provide a supportive arts learning environment that will influence ceramics instruction for an afterschool arts program.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: Subject's confidentiality will be preserved.

I am the sole researcher of this study. For the collation, analysis and reporting of all data, all of the participants will be assigned a pseudonym to prevent individuals from being identified. The school name will also be changed. Any charts used in my dissertation or presentations will be coded. All the data that I collect for this research project will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home. The audio recordings will be destroyed upon the completion of my dissertation. I will reserve the right to use the data and photographs of student artwork but the students' identify will continue to remain confidential.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation in the study will take approximately 2 - 4 months during class.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of the study will be used in drawing conclusions from the investigation on how ceramics instruction and a visual culture curriculum can impact the growth of self-esteem. The study will be reported in the form of a dissertation, which serves to fulfill my requirements for a masters degree in Art Education.